



St Hugh's School

Whole School Communication Policy

## Communication Policy

### Introduction

This document is a statement of the aims, principles and strategies for communication within St Hugh's School. This policy will be reviewed in accordance with the School Development Plan. All new staff will be given a copy of the policy to highlight the communication ethos at St Hugh's School. The document will be reviewed four yearly by the Communication Team lead.

St Hugh's is an 11-19 outstanding special school. We cater for students with a range of moderate, severe and profound/multiple learning difficulties as well as complex medical needs and Autism. The majority of students have significant communication difficulties. Communication underpins all learning and therefore we are committed to providing specialised teaching to promote speech, language and communication skills in all our students.

### Aims

Within our overall school, aim of 'Learn, Believe, Achieve, Together' our school communication aims are to:

1. Adopt a **total communication** approach throughout school, where students have access to their own means of communication **throughout the day**.
2. Develop means of communication appropriate to each student's individual needs.
3. Create opportunities for communication throughout the curriculum to enable each student to communicate to the best of their ability.

### Students starting school

All students have a tailored transition plan on entry to school which is developed in consultation with the feeder schools, both mainstream and St Luke's over an extended period.

All students' communication needs are reviewed on entry to school initially through informal observations. On entry to school many of our students are already known to Speech and Language Therapy (SALT). If a student is not known in this arena and it is deemed necessary, school staff can refer them by addressing any concerns to the Specialist SALT TA's or the communication lead. If a student has specific eating and/or drinking needs, they will come under the remit of both communication and complex leads within school, who will liaise with the appropriate professional agencies and work together for the most appropriate approach to support the student in question.

### Students who receive targeted and specialist speech and language support

Students who are known to speech and language therapy are assessed within the school setting by professional therapists, using a combination of individual assessments: classroom observations: liaison between staff and family and where necessary home observations. Therapists produce care plans and specialist speech and language TA's within school work with students to embed these skills at a targeted level. Care plans are kept in the students black folder, along with any reports or amendments regarding speech and language care.

Targets for speech and language development will feature on EHCP and PAP documents and will be reported on termly. It is the responsibility of the class teacher to work with specialist TA's to discuss progress to target and update paperwork accordingly. Specialist TA's will liaise with class

teachers to keep them updated on progress and any strategies that can be deployed at a universal level.

Not all children stay on SALT caseload and can be discharged after an assessment from qualified speech and language therapists. When they leave specialist care, a discharge plan will be produced, which must be kept in student's black folders and referred to for ongoing support at class level. Teaching staff can liaise directly with Specialist TA's for ideas for strategies and next steps when progress has been achieved.

**Student's needs** are best met when education and SALT work closely together in the following ways:

- SALT observation in classes to share good practice and negotiate further communication goals within classroom setting.
- Joint writing of outcomes to inform Education Health and Care plans.
- Input into class based programmes.
- Distribution of specialist teaching assistants across the full age range with targeted individual and group support for students.
- Baseline level of training for all staff and specific training according to individual needs.

### **Monitoring & Evaluating**

The importance of monitoring and evaluating student's progress is central to their development. As with all communication methods, regular opportunities to use these are vital for the student to achieve access. Signs, symbols and communication aids must **always** be available to the students:

- Within the classroom/teaching area
- Around school
- In the community
- On school transport
- To take home/respite for parents/carers

The appropriate SALT, Teacher and specialist TA will monitor student's progress. Class teachers continually monitor and evaluate student's progress in the area of communication. Support will be given as needed and/or requested.

### **Communication Methods in School**

At St Hugh's we adopt a total communication approach using a range of alternative communication methods to support and encourage speech and language development. These are not used in isolation and a student may use several of these methods.

#### **MAKATON**

This is a signing system used alongside speech to develop a student's understanding of language and their ability to express themselves. The use of signing throughout the school day by staff greatly enhances a student's ability to be an effective communicator. All teaching staff and Teaching Assistants are offered specialist Makaton training. Sign of the week is shared with students with a view to use these signs at every opportunity. All staff have access to a Makaton masterclass on a weekly basis.

#### **On Body signing**

For specific students with complex learning difficulties, a set of core tactile signs have been identified which allow for additional processing time and gives additional sensory information (after consultation with SALT, complex or communication lead).

### **Picture Exchange Systems**

These are used where considered appropriate throughout school, where students learn to exchange picture symbols/photographs to communicate.

### **Symbols**

The use of symbols alongside the written word provides a valuable support and is encouraged across the school to support language understanding and expression. It is the responsibility of all staff to provide symbol vocabulary as appropriate. All symbols should be provided at the appropriate language level for the target audience and using the black and white colour option only, unless colour is required for meaning e.g. rainbow

### **Pictorial Representations & Photographs**

Some students within school access their communication via the use of either photographs or colour pictorial representation. It is the responsibility of the team staff to provide appropriate pictorial vocabulary (often after consultation with SALT, specialist TAs or the communication lead)

### **Objects of Reference**

Many of our students with complex needs, and some within the main body of the school use Objects of Reference. This raises awareness of changes during the day and to develop anticipation of forthcoming activities. Again the school uses a standardised set of Objects of Reference to ensure consistency of approach across the school and at times of transition from one class base to another. Some students require personalised objects of reference (after consultation with SALT, specialist TAs or the communication lead).

### **Communication Aids**

A range of low tech and high tech voice output communication aids are used throughout the school. Our commitment to supporting this area of communication is reflected in ongoing financial investment in assistive technologies, and our links with Barnsley Assistive Technology Regional Hub. An audit of current aids available within school is held by communication lead.

### **Communication Books**

These are individually designed for each student and may include symbols, photos, coloured pictures and written words. They may be used as the student's primary communication system or as back-up system in case the mid-tech and high-tech aids break down. They are also used to supplement verbal communication where vocabulary may be reduced e.g. for emotions and feeling. These are the responsibility of the TAs within the Team Base who may be supported in their development of appropriate input by the specialist TA.

### **Communication Profiles and Pen Portraits**

These give staff vital information about a student's individual needs including personal information, as well as how they communicate. The communication profiles are updated termly and pen portraits are updated once a year at time of Annual Review or earlier if information changes significantly.

### **Communication Interventions within School**

There is an expectation that all staff embed communication targets and interventions within their curriculum delivery, this is monitored termly via lesson observations, Personal Achievement plan analysis and monitoring of teaching by the senior leadership team.

Students in KS3 and KS5 at Broughton access a communication curriculum as a discrete subject for at least 45 minutes per week. Strategies and approaches from these lessons are carried over into other curriculum areas and tie in with skills and knowledge essential for KS4 accreditation. Students specifically focus on:

- Effective Listening
- Effective Verbal and Nonverbal Skills
- Positive Relationships
- Self-Management and Aiming High
- Teamwork and Leadership skills
- Self Esteem and Positivity

The communication lead works with the specialist TA's to ensure that intervention for students with identified SLCN are in place within the classrooms and on individual withdrawal programmes where appropriate, these programmes are monitored by SaLT.

### **Professional Development**

Identifying training needs of staff is vital to ensure continued progress for our students. These needs will be identified and met as follows:

- An induction package for new staff where they access in-house training on communication and an introduction to AAC.
- It is the school's responsibility to identify staff training needs and support communication at a universal level. The implementation of this is delivered through INSET or twilight training sessions.
- All permanent staff are offered MAKATON training to an appropriate level.
- Staff are also responsible for identifying their own training needs in conjunction with discussion with SLT at performance management meetings or EDR's and can apply for relevant courses.
- Staff training needs may also be monitored through questionnaires; this highlights gaps in knowledge and aids the planning of training that targets these areas for development.

### **Transition out of School**

When students are preparing to leave St Hugh's they are supported over an extended period to prepare for all changes and this is arranged in conjunction with the student, their family/carers and the receiving setting to ensure that all needs and requirements are communicated and relevant training identified. In accordance with the SEND Code of Practice around the EHCP, a multiagency approach ensures everyone is involved.